

DEPTHS UNSOUNDED

BY EDWINA STANTON BABCOCK

IT was after the carnival. There had been all the climax and surfeit which had been dreamed of by its indefatigable promoters. The usual bets, flirtations, quarrels, and heart-burnings had been furthered, discussed, registered. It now remained but to stretch the wrinkles out of dazzling canvas, to call into play elaborate and new-fangled block and tackle, and to sail away. One by one, yachts fired their emphatic salutes and showed their green and brown keels on the close-hauled tack past the harbor buoys. The carnival was over. There was now nothing to do but sail elsewhere, the better to review it, the better to criticize.

Meanwhile, the season grew steadily beautiful. There were winds and tides of unwonted favor. The witchery of days so blue-skied, so emerald-watered, crept even into that fluid which courses through the veins of the leisure classes, a fluid which, by tradition or for the romantic flavor of the thing, is still being called "blood."

Men and women accustomed at home conventionally to ignore the growing popularity of getting a special summons from the "wild," now began to admit that there was something in nature. It grew to be a fad to find beauty along the stern New England coast; quite a pose to note how many ways an unsophisticated American landscape can picturesquely arrange itself.

Under awnings, from the depths of comfortable wicker chairs, it was proposed to do a little exploring. Why not get away from the usual course, sail around Heather Island, and put into Gray Harbor? It might be a bore, there might be bad weather, but—and

even these painstaking blasé ones permitted themselves a thrill at the idea of this—it would kill time.

Therefore, the summer cottagers of Gray Harbor woke from their afternoon torpor to see the misty lunette of their horizon broken by leaning towers of sail, to hear the whistles of small steam yachts rounding the harbor lighthouse, and to marvel at the beautiful lines and rigging of larger craft waiting outside the bar for high water.

"Twelve yachts from the carnival fleet," was the yawning comment of the cottagers. The energetic separated themselves sufficiently from hammock and novel to level a glass, penetrate the mystery of club pennant and private signal, and to moralize upon the amount of money it takes to "run" a yacht. Then they lost interest.

But not so with the hotel guests, the Arachnida, whose endeavors are in the restless places. Here prevailed interest more robust, curiosity unsated. In the presence of the twelve, white-sailed, bright-brassed, immaculately-jackied, the Arachnida discovered fine web stuffs to their weavings. One by one airy tissues were hung to the conversational breeze.

"That black schooner yacht *Spirit* is full of fast people. Nobodies. The kind of people who charter yachts and tag around at fashionable resorts to see the fun, whose life philosophy (that of the tentmaker) usually demonstrates in a residuum of seventy-five empty champagne bottles washed upon the sanctity of private beaches. A reporter told Mr. Arachne . . ."

"That big beauty of a steam yacht is the *Norseman*, owned by Judge Har-

beck. The judge just now passed the hotel—the man with the bushy eyebrows. The lady with him is his sister. The Bishop of I—— is his guest.”

Round and round, over and over, the Arachnida worked their delicate patterns. The judge was a terribly severe old man except where the happiness of his only daughter was concerned. Her youth, her beauty, her wealth—but the piazza weavers are no mean artists; when they speak of wealth they know better than to limit by mere signs and wonders. Whether they wish to imply the overwhelming presence of it or the lamentable absence of it, they simply pause in their spinning, hold on by a single thread, and, like their daring furtive prototypes, swing off into space!

While the webs increased in number night came down on Gray Harbor. The shops and bazaars spread their snares, the band began its uncouth yearnings. Then the summer crowd, that airy transient froth which luxuriates in its own negative bubble, which is as sweet and effervescent as its own glass of strawberry and chocolate flavor, began to foam out in starry-eyed flirtation, in mothly fluttering. Up and down street it spread, loitering, laughing, savoring itself. And as the night breeze bore out to the harbor something of its sibilance, something of its wistful mystery, came inevitable response. One by one, launch, gig, and dinghy skimmed shoreward; one by one, landed parties, mostly bored, mostly stiff in the legs, mostly overdressed in the last gasp of expensive carelessness.

The bishop knew that the sort of moon that rose out of the sea and floated over the masts of the harbor was not the sort of moon little Miss Harbeck liked. She preferred moons rather bent and broken, aged moons shivering up their windy stairs of cloud. It amused him, coming to join her on the after-deck, to see her head disappointedly

turned away from the round red face ogling her. It occurred to him that just in that way had he seen her turn away from one untasted sweet to order another. Of the age, of the tolerance that finds charm in the ultra fastidious, he smiled sympathetically, drawing up a chair.

“Is this the scenery you arranged?” He loved whimsically to find fault with her. “Are we to sit staring at the hickory-dickory-dock moon and see our noble thoughts run up and down it like the mercurial mouse in the rhyme?”

He bent to move her a little farther out of the draught, remarking that he could see the *Norseman's* gig returning empty except for the Swede in charge.

“That means that your father and Miss Penelope have fallen into the pits dug for them ashore and will come back to us penniless, laden with old crockery and fond representations of antique.”

He smiled at the thought. “What a night it is—except, of course, for your very inferior moon.”

He busied himself tucking in her rug, meanwhile stealing keen glances at the half-averted face.

“If only your father's sailors would not so Procrusteanize that helpless accordion, if only that black schooner *Spirit* did not persist in shutting off our view of the town lights—” He broke off with a laugh at his own carping.

The bishop had developed a regular method previous to the confessional. His small talk, like the perforated screen between priest and penitent, was a mere patter of punctuations. Having tactfully raised it between him and a diffidence he was tender of, he went directly to the point.

“Well—how about our council of war?”

The girl shook her head. Immediately, against the moon, now expanded into a disk of rice-paper whiteness, he caught the glitter of tears. It also struck him anew, the faylike charm of the face, the dreaming expression of a

character that had not yet guessed at itself. As she plunged enthusiastically into the stating of her case he told himself that the judge and Miss Penelope were unalterably right. True, in a weak moment he had pledged himself to two young people to disagree with them, to use his influence—nonsense! Gilbert himself was only a strong-jawed, cavern-eyed soldier boy, and she? A little flower-faced thing that sat in the dark and cried—picked a quarrel with a rice-paper moon. It was in an attitude fixed not so much in attention as in musing that the bishop sat and listened.

"And they ended by saying that we must wait two years," Miss Harbeck concluded with the effect of climax. "They calmly invited Gilbert to run home, as if we had been children." (He thought how absurdly undeveloped was her small scorn.) "It is the first time father has ever been ridiculous." (She meant that it was the first time he had ever denied her.) "Aunty, of course, was not quite so bad, but they were both stupid about it."

The bishop smiled. She paused, looking at him with the air of telling a grand secret before she confessed. "I don't mean to be disrespectful—and, anyway, you don't count—you are different." The man of experience luxuriated in this allowance for him! "But older people are the greatest disappointment of my life—why"—as her companion lifted his eyebrows—"they're so material, they think only of the world; they have lost their ideals, they—you know what I mean," she nodded at him urgently.

Though he bowed his head in mock humility, it was evident that the bishop himself set store by her belief in his ability to understand.

"Two years," she went on, wistfully, intent upon her grievance. "Can't you see how they must have forgotten—if they ever knew? They act exactly as if it were two eggs at breakfast, two blocks of ice in the *Norseman's* refrig-

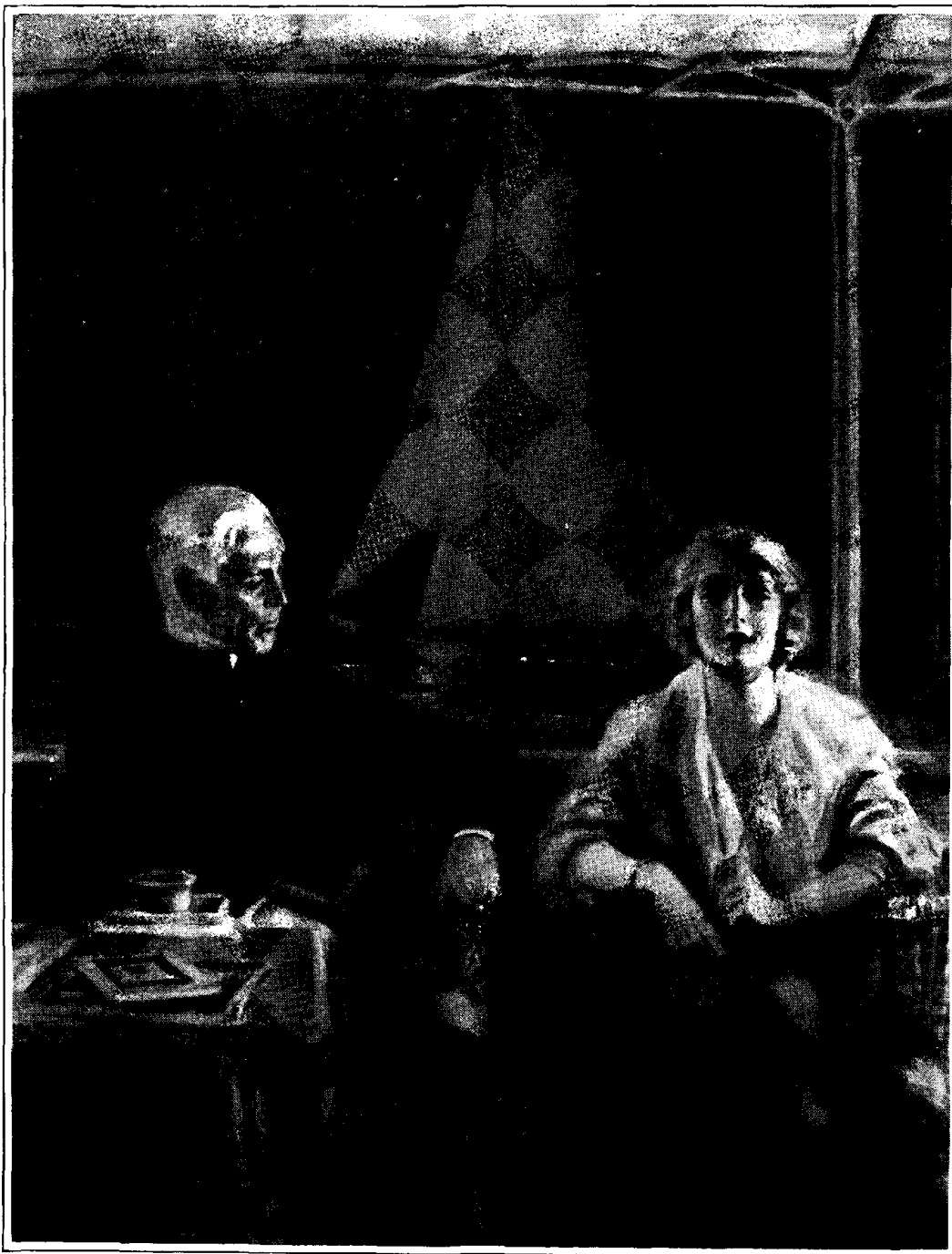
erator, not two"—a depth of voice unusual to his ears broke like a wave in her throat—"two petals from a flower that grows only once."

The bishop opened his eyes. Well! The child had certainly learned something. If falling in love did that kind of thing—he experienced distinct approval of the two-petal idea. Out of his childless, widowed experience he endeavored to form a correct estimate of what it signified. The judge had held to it inexorably that she was "too young."

What constituted age? The bishop had seen very young girls of thirty, very old ones of sixteen. Was a young woman who could understand about fallen petals—? After all, the bishop felt he was not yet ready to talk. He drew the rug from his feet and got up to walk back and forth. He stopped at the stern, staring out over the water. It seemed that he looked into some darkness of forgotten things. What constituted age? How many fallen petals made a man or a woman old? Suddenly, and most unmanfully, he felt a great impatience with his friends, the judge and Miss Penelope.

When he returned, Miss Harbeck had a great deal more to tell him. It grew easy, under the mingling night noises of the harbor, to be confidential. There was the rattling of hoisted or dropped mainsail, the occasional slap of oars thrown on a landing stage, the short, nervous stroke of a lobsterman rowing by in his dory. From the town floated strains from the band, bursting with such emotion as swells the bosom of an honest seaside band. And there was one other sound.

From the suggestive darkness of the schooner *Spirit* came the ring of a clear tenor singing, with the flippant cynicism that has somehow appropriated the profound sadness of Omar Khayyám, "Myself When Young." Soon this voice was joined by that of a woman, a high shaky soprano, piercing the night air with another song, persistently sus-



Drawn by John Alonzo Williams

SHE WAS SO GLORIOUSLY SURE OF THE FUTURE

taining it against the first. The two voices ended in a wanton discord that brought shrieks of laughter from an audience evidently not hypersensitive. The bishop, wincing, thoughtfully gnawed his lip. At the carnival this yacht, the *Spirit*, had fortunately anchored farther off, not so far, however,

but that one might surmise as to the caliber of its party. He glanced at the delicate profile near him, expecting to see it jarred, at least annoyed, curious.

But Miss Harbeck was absorbed in a chain she had drawn up from the fluffiness of her dinner blouse. Suspended from it were two rings that

glittered. The girl leaned over, the better to allow him to examine one, an exquisitely carved sardonyx, whose dark dignity and Greek inscription might better have befitted the firm austerity of his own hand than the slender one laid on his arm. That the same thought was Miss Harbeck's was signified by the dubious way she turned it over and over.

"Do you think it's too solemn for an engagement ring?" She was alluding to the motto—"Depths Unsounded."

"Aunt Penelope says it makes her shudder; even father said it was a little crawly and mysterious, but"—her face lighted—"you can't think how Gilbert loves it. He hopes I will prefer it; he wants me to learn to care for such things."

All the same, the bishop noticed that it was the diamond hoop she thoughtfully slipped upon her finger.

"I've never worn diamonds, you know." She might have been a child apologizing for having picked a flower. "Most girls have diamond engagement rings." He could see how she nerved herself to look with favor on the sard. "Depths Unsounded." She murmured it wistfully. "Does it sound to you a little cold, unlike—?" Her face took on the visionary look of habitual dreaming. What she was about to say was lost in her thought of it.

The bishop, on his last holiday but one, had been fishing with the judge and this soldier Gilbert of the solemn ring. The unpleasant duty of putting the salmon out of their gasping by one decided knock on the head—it had invariably been Gilbert who had attended to that. The bishop recalled his readiness, his dark mastery as a creature of superior endowment, over the struggling silver life he stilled. Somehow was it not all of the same piece, his bestowing a foreboding ring like this on a little creature of untried wing, unexpanded aura—this Psyche calyxed, crescent, unrealizing? The everlasting conceit of the boy, demanding that she put aside

her natural preferences, her illusions, even to the point of her engagement tokens! It was a curious analogy; but the bright smile, the cool philosophy of the man who had so obligingly done his duty by the salmon was haunting. So, the bishop could see it; this young Gilbert would cheerfully do his duty, taking her silver dreams, her pretty innocencies, knocking them one by one on their heads. He fitted his delicate hands together.

Entirely contrary to Miss Harbeck's expectation, her friend suddenly found himself of the same opinion as her father. He could not, he judiciously pointed out, come between her and her guardians against his own personal conviction, and that conviction was— He shook his head smiling ruefully at her. He dwelt upon the peculiar political work to which Gilbert had devoted his life; that sort of work made a machine of a man, it left a man little time for— The bishop suddenly stopped. As an interesting experiment it occurred to him to get Miss Harbeck to set forth her views as to the felicities of married life.

As she leaned forward, giving with impressment her mature summing-up, her listener's attention was for a minute diverted. A launch had just put off from the *Spirit*. It passed close under the lee of the *Norseman*, near enough to distinguish the faces of men and women. The party was evidently out of sorts, noisy, quarrelsome, faces and voices thickened with the coarseness of frank dissipation. Even in the spiritualizing moonlight was revealed a brazen tawdriness. The bishop wondered that these things never roused even the interest of displeasure in the girl at his side. For a moment he wondered if it was selfishness, this apparent lack of perception as to the outside world and its irregularities. The thought, however, faded out as he looked at her sitting in the moonlight, drawing out for him the fairy strands of her dream.

After she ended, pausing with a lightly caught breath—"Do you know

how it sounds to me?" The interruption was gently humorous. "It sounds like Scott's novels, a composite Gibson picture, the *matinée*, and large and riotous quaffings of Tennyson, and it is beautiful my dear, very, very beautiful, but—" his slightly quizzical tone was none the less reverent—"have you thought of other things?"

"Other things?" Miss Harbeck took to mean financial considerations. She disposed of the matter with the calm business ability of those who have never wanted. There was her money. There was Gilbert's money. There would never be any worries.

Indeed! Her adviser smiled his congratulation. And had she, he pursued, any definite plan of life. Should they keep house? Should they travel? Were they to live alone or would her father and Miss Penelope—it was all asked to get at some doubt or hesitancy in her. She was so gloriously sure (she who had not seen the salmon provided for).

It appeared that, like Andromache, she expected to combine all old relationships in this new one, daring to believe of it, "Thou art to me father and lady mother, yea, and even brother, even as thou art my goodly husband."

The bishop stared. Wonderingly, he listened to the old world-dream of perfect companionship. They two, Miss Harbeck averred, had been born for each other. Gilbert had told her that. They would fly directly out of a world of reservations and restraints as out of a chrysalis they needed no more. They would be forever happy, floating down rivers, sitting on rocks, watching lanterns swinging under trees, stars hanging in the sky. On Dream Sea their ships would never founder. On Soap-bubble Tree their trembling spheres were iridescent. The road wound on and on and on, for them.

The man who listened closed his eyes. The belief of it, the happy, happy belief of it—he could have put down his head and wept.

A tall sail loomed up suddenly, shut-

ting off the moon, a catboat with spectral bow light came sliding along the night. In the cockpit and up to windward were clustered dark heads; a chorus of youthful voices were raised in the robust pathos of "Seeing Nellie Home," and "Way Down Yonder in de Cornfield." The sailboat passed close by and the gay young faces looking up to the *Norseman* decks seemed to the bishop witnesses to the responsibility he felt. Also, they suggested something. He had never been particularly impressed with the modern girls who added their measure to the adulation his world accorded him; even their enthusiasms, it seemed to him, were touched with a pertness unlovely, unconvincing. But, if it were a case of having to say "no" to a frank damsel, eager for reasons, with a bright, curious eye, a fighting tongue, and a compact little shoulder nicely adapted to the wearing of chips—well, the bishop acknowledged that for this moment he would prefer that kind of girl.

Inside the cock crew, but it did not penetrate the calm of the bishop's face, now professionally cryptic. In his worldly mind he evolved a precious sanity of counsel; in his unworldly soul he tried to bury his doubts. Two years, he said, would change the girl he was talking to into a richer, more gloriously endowed character; what—he hated himself for the desecration of it—what if this stronger, more developed woman should demand fuller, deeper companionship than that of the irrevocably chosen yoke-fellow? He explored deserts she had not imagined, dipped out of bitter seas, and bore doggedly on. . . . It was characteristic of him, his attitude, the sophistication of his advice, the abrupt ending, pushing back his chair and walking away.

To the bishop came suddenly a vision of one of the temples at Paestum where a priest sacrificed to some powerful deity; he wondered how a lamb would look being put to death—if it would turn and bleat and have frightened eyes.

Curiously overrun with the incidental is existence. Who, testing his big cudgel, ever needed more than a grass blade? Who, girding himself for the tragedy, ever failed of being slapped on the back by the joke? When at last he turned, braced to meet his doom of tears and reproaches, the bishop was not prepared to find his young friend out of her chair, standing by the rail, peering down into the darkness.

From where he stood—"Sssh!" The eager gesture surprised him. She beckoned again mysteriously. "I knew I heard them letting down the companion ladder," she whispered. "Someone has come to call--the Pentleys, from the *Butterfly*, I suppose." Her tone was injured, her eyebrows pathetically lifted.

Her companion smiled.

"Oh, you don't realize what it means," she retorted, "sitting up and listening to their dreadful motor talk!" She leaned over, still peering into the darkness. "Why, it's a girl--alone!" She bent over a minute longer, then turned, her hand laid impulsively on his arm. "Would you mind," shyly, "if I ran away a minute--just a little minute?"

True, there was light enough on the after deck to see by—but the light from the companionway revealed the broken little face, the proud little hostess's face, wet with tears.

"Why—it's only a question of damp lashes." He said it gently, but her answer was a dangerous trembling of the lips. He kindly turned her toward the saloon door, himself turning away to do her bidding. As he walked to the companionway he smiled to think how she would return calm, composed, a miracle of correct little surfaces. He pondered upon what he had seen of rosebud facsimiles of the old familiar society mask. That mask! He wondered if any man or woman could say when he or she had first assumed it.

There appeared to be some difficulty in bringing the visiting gig alongside, and the girl who mounted the companion steps did so breathlessly, as with

the hurry of sudden arrival. She paused, hatless, wrapped in a dark cape, on the top step. She raised her eyes questioningly to the figure waiting to receive her.

"You are Bishop Farwell?" she gasped.

He was puzzled at this diffidence. Meeting the bishop's eyes many seasoned men and women found no small matter; but as lightly, talking, he led the way aft, he was thinking that eyes seldom met his with the dilation of hysteria, a widening as of something trapped. As he paused for his guest to precede him he was impressed by some other things. A carelessness in her attire, that roughness of the dark hair. He drew up chairs, lightly framing his pleasant suppositions, prophesying the immediate appearance of Miss Harbeck. Already he had the intuition that this caller on the *Norseman* had come to see him and him alone.

"I met a great many of Miss Harbeck's guests at her carnival luncheon" (he was rapidly forecasting a possible situation), "have I your forgiveness for saying that it is easier for me to remember the names of the Merovingian kings than it is to recall the names of those charming young ladies?"

He spoke lightly, frivolously, with the half-British accent which is the petted mannerism of the less Puritan American; but his smile was guarded, his eyes a little wary.

The visitor did not smile. She sat back in her chair in a relaxed position, suggesting fatigue. Her cape fell away from her shoulder and he observed that her yachting attire was damp, crumpled. Clearly, this visitor could not be from the *Butterfly*. In turn, he could see that his guest seemed furtively to study details of his own appearance. He felt uncomfortably that she measured him, that she found him wanting. He saw her watching in vain for some expected quality, now in his voice, now in his face.

There is so much jungle in us all, that it takes the tiniest crackling of the twig

to make the most nonchalant spring to guard. The bishop went on speaking of the weather, of the carnival, of whatever topic suggested itself, his eyes meanwhile coldly regardful, the eyes of one making an inventory. It was not, therefore, with the feeling of shock, so much as with the strengthening of conviction, that his gaze was suddenly arrested by a ribbon tied around his visitor's sleeve. A ribbon band, tied loosely and carelessly as he had seen them on the sleeves of one or two girls at the carnival—a ribbon that bore in stamped gold letters the name "*Spirit*."

"But we have not yet solved our mystery, and I see that you are not going to help me. May I try again, since Miss Harbeck has not appeared?"

"You are Miss Weston of the *Brigand*? But, no, the *Brigand* is not in harbor. There, you see?" He shrugged his shoulders with the sure aplomb of privileged helplessness. His eyes, however, never moved. They were fixed upon the white face under the electric lights.

With a kind of rude contempt, an effect as of pushing away tentative delicacies, the girl before him raised her head. She looked at him intently; when she answered it was as if trying to hide sudden distrust and dislike. "No," she said, slowly, "I am no one you know. I have heard of you often." He gathered at once that what she had heard of him was very different from what she saw in him. "I live in the town where the carnival was held," She waited a minute, then added. "I came in to-night on—on one of these yachts."

"Oh!" He glanced at the gold-lettered band on her arm.

"Yes." She stirred, hesitated, then suddenly, the words seeming to come in a rush against her better judgment, against her lips trembling to stem them—"I am in great trouble. Will you help me? You can. Will you?" She asked it slowly, feverishly, and again throbbed into her eyes the hysteria he had noticed before.

"You are a guest," the bishop questioned her slowly, "on the schooner yacht *Spirit*?" He saw that under the trouble of the face turned to his lay qualities of recklessness, headlong, defiant. As they faced each other he knew she could not lie with that gold-lettered band on her arm; but, he considered, was it a truthful face that tried to dare his penetration? Was it a truthful voice that caught in her throat as she answered shortly, "Yes."

There was a pause. Did the visitor suddenly discern something pitiless in the searching gaze fixed upon her that she suddenly shrank back and shivered? In the short silence the woman miserably dropped her head, the bishop nervously listened for the sound of a returning footstep.

A party of men rowing out to their knockabout floated by. One of them, lying back in the stern, took his pipe from his mouth, knocked out the ashes, and began to sing, accompanied by his companions with the singular and not unlovely melodies of the campus "swipe" chords. As the boat fell into the night beyond, the first voice was left singing alone. On the night air the words hung poignantly, yearningly:

"Beloved, it is morn.

A redder berry on the thorn, a deeper
yellow on the corn;

Pray, Love, for me, that I may be faith-
ful to God and thee."

In the silence following, the stranger lifted her head.

"I see"—she tried for calmness—"I see that you know about that yacht—about the *Spirit*. It was at the carnival, anchored near you, I believe. But you never saw me on it. I never knew what they were."

He scrutinized her sharply. Was the indignation in her voice genuine? "One of them is—was—a man I cared for. I worked at a hotel where he used to see me. We often walked together. He asked me aboard to supper. I did not know how—" she faltered—"to refuse

him. When we were at supper, when I did not know it—they got up anchor. He promised to return to-night. I have asked him—I begged him to put me ashore.”

She stopped, then added, in a voice suddenly empty of everything but hardness, “Of course, I know now that he never intended to return to-night.”

If it had happened at home, if she had come to him in his quiet study, with his Forlì and Fra Angelico pointing him steadily to his duty. . . . If, indeed, the telephone were at his elbow, making possible conferences with this and that kindly philanthropist . . . in his study the bishop would at least have given himself pause. On board the *Norseman*, he summed up thus:

That his visitor was making use of an unfortunate escapade to engage the sympathies of such persons of power and benevolence as she might find aboard a yacht like the *Norseman*. He was familiar with such schemes. She must promptly be put right as to the success of hers. And there was something else that worried him. Every moment he expected to hear the light step emerge from the saloon, every moment to meet the expression of his friend's daughter flashing inquiry at him and this—interloper. Instinctively he guessed at the child's feeling of pain, her sensitive horror at this unhappy thing, this dark mushroom of life that had sprung up so near the fair budding of her own happiness. An unreasoning anger made him decide quickly. He took a restless step or two before turning to the figure in the chair.

“This is most unfortunate, and believe me”—he tried for sympathy in his voice—“I am exceedingly sorry for you. But, of course, you have done the right thing. There are respectable hotels here, I believe, boarding houses. . . . I will furnish you with funds. There is a regular boat leaving in the morning. . . . You understand that this is all I can do for you.” He might have said it in a tone that meant, “I believe

in and trust you.” He chose rather to suggest that there was a young girl of his party who must be shielded from disagreeable contact. It was the way he took to let his visitor see that she must leave the *Norseman* at once.

Most people have a lasting incredulity for brutality. We may generalize about the coldness and selfishness of our world or of our friend, but the blow comes fresh, the treachery is forever new. The visitor from the *Spirit* rose obediently but unsteadily. So might a person walk toward the mirage fading before his eyes. So might quiver a mouth tasting new and ashy bitterness.

“Why!” the girl said in a low tone—she seemed afraid the very night might hear and condemn the lack she herself must bitterly acknowledge—“why, it cannot be that *you* have not understood?”

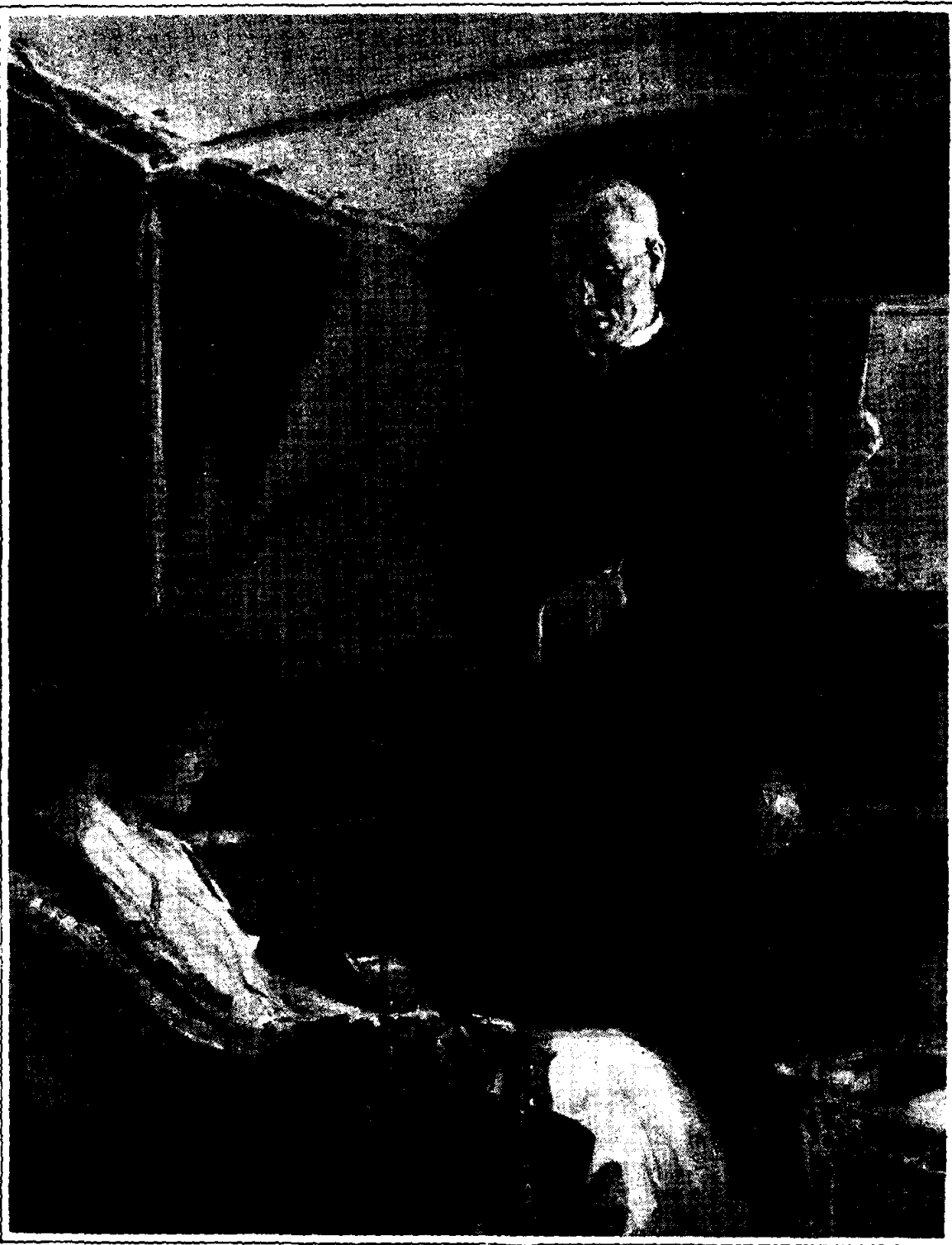
The bishop was stiffly silent. The reproach was an impertinence which he told himself he was accustomed to. He had had much experience in earlier days with men and women who had taken rash steps and been frightened back into the paths of rectitude. They had a unique way of trying to prove the limitations of their benefactors. Nervously he dreaded the sound of the light step, silently waiting for this unwelcome guest to leave. It was this grave silence that was his answer to her question. He was surprised that she dared break it.

“You have said”—she was trying for coldness like his own—“you are Bishop Farwell?”

He signified “Yes,” impatience in the affirmation.

“I have often heard of you. A woman told me once that to shake hands with you meant to gain strength. I saw your face at the carnival. I—I trusted it.” A flicker of displeasure crossed the face she had “trusted,” but she bore resolutely on.

“When, to-night” . . . she closed her eyes as if trying to shut out the memory of what the day had brought her . . . “when I realized what my world



Drawn by John Alonzo Williams

"YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS ALL I CAN DO FOR YOU"

will think me, when I realized how impossible it will be to go back to that town where I am known . . . I could see all of me, my soul, for a single mistake slipping down . . . down." She paused with an uncontrollable tremor. "But I had the strength to come

someone who, God help me, I still believed would—"

It burst from her in a bitter sob, the ending of that sentence. "Surely," she leaned toward him with a kind of pitiful searching of his callousness—
"But I had the strength to come to you, surely you will take me somewhere

where I can fight, where I can forget; if you will not—why . . .” A strange weakness, a look that he at once felt to be the underlying genius of her nature flattened the emotion out of her face. She hung her head muttering, “I can’t do it alone.”

That there was less of the actress in her now; that she wore the sincerity of desperate appeal, her judge was forced to admit. With the idea of saying something helpful, he put one or two questions. But out of the brief dialogue it seemed to him that he drew nothing but her cowardly wish to lean upon his strength, to batten upon his soul-fiber. It was past the time when he wished to collect the curious lichens of human nature; he knew younger men who exulted in that sort of philanthropy, but . . . Keenly, morbidly, he shrank from it, the advance of the soul parasite, the clinging of hands irresolute for aught but clinging. The problem!

Up in the town the band was concluding the night’s concert with the Belgian hymn. The massive chords ceased suddenly like a sob. Summer night leveled on the black waters of the harbor. Pensive scents of the sea mingled with the breath of the moors, with snatches of perfume from the old town gardens. Amid these things suggestive, subtle of association, the bishop, angry against his will, found himself caught in the toils of spiritual tangle with the girl standing there. Had it not been for a deeper reason than a woman’s weak cowardice that she had come to him? Was it for any reason stronger than a cowardice of his own that he was refusing, ought he not to. . . What was that?

Surely the sound of a silken skirt. Surely a light step his ear never mistook. . . .

Do men and women understand that it is seldom their own hearts and brains that decide for them? Circumstance, that little ballet dancer pirouetting before feasts and tragedies, decided for the bishop.

“I think your launch is waiting.” So extreme gentleness and courtesy may create an impassible gulf. “Will you not accept such help as I can give you?”

Almost immediately, as if mocking his words, the breeze wafted to them the sound of loud talking and laughter; down over the harbor a man’s mellow tenor made sonorous by the megaphone of his rounded fists, hailed from a landing:

“On board yacht *Spirit*!”

A moment later, from the same landing stage came the judge’s voice, crisp, imperative, rasped with the annoyance of undesirable propinquity, “*Norseman*, ahoy!”

At once rose the chug, chug, of the *Norseman*’s obedient little tender. But no launch shot out from the side of the *Spirit*. The reason for this showed in the anxious countenance of the Swede who appeared at the *Norseman*’s companionway. He was waiting. His gesture to his passenger was undecided, but the girl nodded reassuringly. An old habit of bravado, some desperate strain in her nature, seemed to thrill through her at the sound of that voice calling with its indolent power of command, “On board schooner *Spirit*.”

She turned a wild face in the direction whence it came, then looked again into the face in which she had once believed. With a slight smile she turned away.

It was not, however, until she stood, hair blowing in the wind, waiting for the gig to steady below, that the full force of what she was about to do came home to the bishop. What idea had come into her head? What . . . what had she, this little waif, expected of him? . . . what was he allowing her to commit herself . . . here on the yacht of his friends?

“Of course, I cannot permit. . . .” He stood there in the half light of the deck raising that powerful white hand, the hand laid so often on young heads, whose very gesture was command. It fell clumsily on the air . . . all author-

ity gone out of it. It might have been the hand of a banker, a professional pool player; any soldier's hand would have more earnest authority. And she, this slip of a girl who faced him—what had happened to her young face? . . . Was there not about her a somber decision, something that brooked no interference, no misunderstanding? The slender figure seemed to grow majestic, terrible to . . . to remind him . . . him, the bishop, of something which he would have believed he could forget. He passed his hand over his eyes, watching her slender form float away from him in descending into veils of mystery and night.

Where the *Spirit's* launch boiled the water into a ghostliness of phosphorescent gleam rose white patches of foam that, like foam faces, seemed to stare blankly and break into blackness. One, a girl's solemn rebuking face, set toward a conscious destiny, did not look back as it drifted away into darkness.

How long the bishop stood watching he was not conscious. Suddenly there broke from him the sharp ejaculation of a man who must act at once. Walking toward the rosy lights of the saloon, his thoughts were not so much dismayed as whipped into a turmoil of confused expedients. He had made a mistake to let the girl go. But how—how might he have safely kept her, this child of infamy, of evil associations, on the deck of the *Norseman*? Suddenly he remembered something. He paused at the door of the saloon, composing his face, ready for superficial inquiry, ready to make evasive reply.

Senda Harbeck met him at the door. He noticed in bewilderment that she had donned a heavy cloak and her dark blue Breton cap. There was something clear-meaning, definite in the look she turned on him.

"Has father come back yet . . .? I . . . I must see him . . . at once."

"They've gone for him."

Suddenly he saw her tremble. "Dear, what is it? Are you cold . . .? Some-

thing unmistakable in her wide, reproachful eyes made the bishop try to take the two cold little hands. Suddenly he understood. "You heard . . .?" in grave reproof. "You . . ." he tried to hide the sudden shame rushing through him. "You listened?"

It would seem that she wished to observe the outer respect due his cloth. The girl bowed her head gravely.

"I heard! I listened!" She repeated the words after him as if wishing not to shirk their significance. "I came back to . . . to . . . welcome her. I heard her say . . . what she did, and heard you tell her . . . that you would . . . that you *could* not help her. Was it because you were here on this boat's deck or because you would not have helped her really, anyway? I heard you strengthen your argument against saving her with my name, with the fact that I am here on my father's yacht. . . ."

She paused, the light from the saloon cast a strange glow on her solemn young face as she said, "It was considerate."

"It was most unhappy, most regrettable." The bishop found that in proportion as her voice was broken he could keep his own controlled. "She was a very frequent type of hysterical woman without moral quality." (Since this child had listened, since she had, as he could see, judged him, he decided not to spare her his sharp decision.) "She was not sincere. You heard her refuse my offer of help?"

There was a tray of glasses and a punchbowl placed on a near-by table; the tall figure in its clerical garb went over to this and filled one of the small cups, which he offered to the girl. At her silent refusal he calmly filled another for himself. He raised the cup to his lips, saying, quietly: "It was not my intention to lose sight of her. When your father returns we will see what can be done."

"When my father returns," replied the girl, steadily, "I shall ask him to let *me* go to that yacht and see her and beg her to come back—if she can forgive

us. . . ." She drew a long breath and looked at the little watch glittering on her wrist . . . "if it is not too late."

She stopped a sob and he saw, regretfully, how the thing was exciting her. "I should have come out at once, the moment she came to us . . . if I had not . . ." again her voice quivered—"trusted you."

He ignored the slight childish shaft.

"*You will ask her to forgive you . . . us?*" He meant to say it quizzically; he was able at least to smile; but he saw with astonishment that she met the smile hotly.

"To forgive me?" with quiet passion. "I am a girl of her own age. I am sheltered from—from *everything*. It was to protect me further that you drove her away. . . . Ah, you were no more true to *me* than you were to her." The young [breast heaved and the bishop saw with wonder a hauteur he could not have imagined in her. For a moment she seemed to him like a young Sibyl that panted and labored with condemnation and prophecy. There was no flippancy in this brave little mouth that summed him up. . . . "You have been true to nothing."

The fact was very quietly given him. He put out his hand to the back of a chair. Did this child guess, did she know, how far she had seen? Under his successes, his power, his charm, rose what he alone knew of himself and it stared him in the face. College days, one or two forlorn hopes of radicalism, then the compromises and futilities that had placed him beyond worldly criticism, had made him forever the target of his own scoffing. But she—this little flower that the judge had kept so fair, so unwitting of life . . . why, it was as if his own Fra Angelico, his own Forlì, a thing all rose and gold and azure aspiration, had stepped suddenly out of triptych or lunette and come, daz- zlingly inexorable, to judge him.

"You think . . ." he began. . . . He guessed what she thought, what he knew he ought to have done.

Suddenly the great man standing there remembered the girl's remark: "Older people are the greatest disappointment of my life;" at her childish exception in his favor . . . and now . . . "You have been true to nothing."

"I see . . . you would have had me believe in her. You would have had me trust her." His voice was very gentle now. He stood looking on this crusading face of youth with utter sadness. As a boy he had felt like that. The bishop only too well understood how he must seem to her stormy compassion. He hoped, since there was so much he still felt he might not say, at least to make peace, but he was not prepared for her answer given with a lip that shook: "I would have had her believe in you . . . the Man of God . . . a great, strong soul that up to—to-night she believed existed. . . . Now she believes in no one. . . . Oh, poor thing, poor thing!"

It was a child that broke down, a child that threw herself into the chair under his hand and passionately wept.

"Little girl, little girl!" the bishop said. His voice broke. Under its mastery, the habit of years, he also made appeal. When at last he could make her look up he remembered the motto on Gilbert's ring and spoke gravely with her as to a woman nearer his own age. "Depths Unsounded". . . . Not for years to come would he be able to forget that deepest, most unutterable woman-cry, "I would have had her believe in you."

"I am sorry," said the bishop. He stared into the summer night. There was a very strange look in his face as he repeated, gravely: "Forgive me. I am . . . sorry."

Twenty minutes later the *Norseman's* little launch was leaving the side of the black schooner *Spirit*, and in the stern sat two girls, one whose bowed head leaned toward the other. The judge and Miss Penelope, anxiously waiting, drew a mutual sigh of relief.

The judge smiled significantly at his sister, asking, "Where'd she get all the *age* . . . ? It's the awful maturity of her I object to! Dear lamb, if she wants to rescue guttersnipes, let her. . . . I say, Penelope, will you sort of keep your eye on this chivalry thing?" He yawned, adding, "But I wouldn't fuss around to-night. Let Farwell and the child manage it together. I could see she'd worked him up to a prodigious pitch. . . . Well, well, Pen, her mother was like that. I suppose we couldn't keep her a child any longer. The next

thing, that young Gilbert will turn up, damn his assurance and his jaw!"

It meant in its way the end of things for the judge. He turned into the saloon, solemnly switching off lights as he went.

But the bishop, waiting to say good night, asked for the sard ring. "'Depths Unsounded,'" he said, smilingly, and seemed his whimsical self. Then he placed the ring on her hand and raised her face to his. And, if after they made their peace and he walked away, a shadow fell upon his own face, it was a shadow that his smile could conquer.